

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00422 060927Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 AGRE-00 AID-05 EB-08 IO-13
COME-00 TRSE-00 HA-05 /093 W
-----012475 060942Z /21

O 060750Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9175
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL UDORN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 422

BANGKOK PASS UDORN ELECTRICALLY

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID US LA UNDP WFP EAGR
SUBJECT: LAO EMERGENCY FOOD AID

REF: STATE 86257

SUMMARY: THE UNDP RESREP TOLD US APRIL 6 THAT THERE
MIGHT STILL BE A NEED FOR U.S. DROUGHT AID TO THE LPDR
NEXT NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER. THERE WAS STILL A GAP TO BE
FILLED OF ABOUT 20,000 TONS OF FOOD. HE ADMITTED, HOW-
EVER, THAT A WFP FOOD FOR WORK PROJECT COULD BE USED TO
FILL THIS GAP. THE EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT FODAG/ROME BE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VIENTI 00422 060927Z

ASKED TO OBTAIN FULL DETAILS ON THIS WFP PROJECT.
DEPENDING ON THE REPORT FROM ROME, WE RECOMMEND THAT WE
CONGRATULATE THE LAO ON THE SUCCESS OF THEIR APPEAL AND
TELL THEM THAT WE ARE POSTPONING ANY DECISION ON OUR
RESPONSE UNTIL LATER IN THE YEAR. END SUMMARY

1. AS INSTRUCTED, WE CALLED ON THE UNDP RESIDENT

REPRESENTATIVE HERE IN VIENTIANE APRIL 6 TO SEEK HIS FORMAL JUDGMENT WHETHER OR NOT THE LAO DROUGHT EMERGENCY FOOD AID APPEAL HAD BEEN MET.

2. THE RESREP BEGAN HIS RESPONSE BY GIVING US REFINED, UPDATED FIGURES ON THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE LAO APPEAL. AS OF APRIL 5, THE LPDR EXPECTED TO RECEIVE 71,689 TONS OF RICE, PLUS 3,000 TONS OF RICE PLEDGED BEFORE THE APPEAL HAD BEEN MADE AND ALREADY DELIVERED. PLEDGES OF 17,791 TONS OF OTHER COMMODITIES HAD ALSO BEEN RECEIVED. THIS MEANT THAT THE LPDR STOOD TO RECEIVE 92,480 TONS OF FOOD, OR STILL ABOUT 20,000 TONS SHORT OF THE REQUIREMENT ANNOUNCED IN JANUARY.

3. THE RESREP SAID THAT THE COMMODITIES ALREADY PLEDGED WOULD ENCUMBER EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL STORAGE AND TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES UNTIL NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER OF THIS YEAR. BY EXPEDITING OR DELAYING SHIPMENTS THROUGH BANGKOK AS REQUIRED, THE RESREP SAID HE THOUGHT THE FLOW COULD BE KEPT EVEN AND THE PIPELINE USED TO BEST ADVANTAGE.

4. BY THE END OF THE YEAR, HOWEVER, THE RESREP SAID THAT HE THOUGHT A U.S. CONTRIBUTION COULD STILL BE NEEDED TO BRIDGE THE REMAINING 20,000 TON GAP. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT A VALID HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VIENTI 00422 060927Z

PREVENTION CASE COULD STILL BE MADE FOR U.S. FOOD AID AT THAT TIME.

5. WE ASKED THE RESREP ABOUT THE EIGHT MILLION DOLLAR WFP FOOD FOR WORK RICE AID WHICH WE UNDERSTOOD HAD BEEN POSTPONED FROM 1978 TO 1979 (VIENTIANE 405, PARA 2). WE ASKED WHETHER OR NOT THIS AID COULD BE UN-POSTPONED AND USED TO FILL THE GAP. THE RESREP SAID THAT THIS AID HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM DESIGNED TO ASSURE THE LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENT OF THE LAO NATIONAL IRRIGATION NETWORK. IT HAD BEEN FIRST PROPOSED FOR 1978, BUT VARIOUS PLANNING AND DESIGN PROBLEMS HAD CAUSED IT TO BE PUT BACK TO 1979. WHEN THE LAO ISSUED THEIR EMERGENCY AID APPEAL, THE WFP HAD PUT A "Q" DESIGNATOR -- EMERGENCY QUICK REACTION -- ON THE PROGRAM AND HAD MOVED IT FORWARD TO THE ORIGINAL 1978 TIME FRAME. BY SO DOING, HOWEVER, A SERIOUS DEROGATION OF THE PROGRAM'S DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECT HAD TO BE ACCEPTED. THE GOOD RESPONSE TO THE LAO APPEAL NOW MEANT THAT THE "Q" DESIGNATOR COULD BE REMOVED AND THE PROGRAM CARRIED OUT SO THAT IT COULD HAVE FULL DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT.

6. WE THANKED THE RESREP FOR HIS FRANKNESS AND POINTED OUT THAT HIS INFORMATION POSED PROBLEMS FOR US. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO BASE A RESPONSE TO THE LAO APPEAL ON EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS WHEN WE KNEW THAT THERE WAS ALWAYS A POSSIBILITY OF A WFP FOOD FOR WORK PROJECT FILLING THE NEED. THE RESREP SAID HE RECOGNIZED OUR PROBLEM, BUT SAID THAT HE STILL THOUGHT A U.S. CONTRIBUTION WOULD BE NEEDED BY THE END OF THE YEAR. LOSING THE POSSIBILITY OF A BASIC, LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENT TO THE LAO NATIONAL IRRIGATION SYSTEM AS A RESULT OF TURNING THE FOOD FOR WORK PROJECT INTO AN EMERGENCY OPERATION WOULD BE A SERIOUS BLOW TO THE LPDR AND THE LAO PEOPLE.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 VIENTI 00422 060927Z

7. COMMENT: IT MIGHT BE USEFUL IF FODAG/ROMZ COULD GET FULL DETAILS OF THE FOOD FOR WORK PROJECT FROM FAO/WFP AND FULL DETAILS ON THE "Q" DESIGNATOR PROCEDURE. BASED ON WHAT WE HAVE HEARD HERE IN VIENTIANE, IT NOW LOOKS -- SPEAKING QUITE FRANKLY -- AS IF THE U.S. WAS NOW BEING ASKED NOT TO RESPOND TO AN EMERGENCY FOOD AID APPEAL BUT RATHER TO MAKE POSSIBLE A BASIC, LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENT IN THE LAO NATIONAL IRRIGATION SYSTEM. THIS MAY BE A GOOD THING, BUT THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT WISH TO JUDGE WHETHER OR NOT SUCH AN EFFORT IS IN ACCORD WITH THE WISHES OF CONGRESS.

8. THE DEPARTMENT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY WISH TO HEAR FROM EMBASSY ROME BEFORE MAKING ANY DECISIONS. FROM OUR PAROCHIAL VIEWPOINT, IT WOULD PROBABLY BE BEST TO GO TO THE LAO, CONGRATULATE THEM ON THE SUCCESSFUL RESPONSE TO THEIR APPEAL, AND STATE THAT WHILE WE ARE STILL HOLDING ANY U.S. RESPONSE UNDER CONSIDERATION, IT LOOKS AS IF THEIR NEEDS ARE BEING MET AT LEAST UNTIL NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER OF THIS YEAR. WE THEREFORE PLAN TO PUT OUR CONSIDERATION PROCESS ON HOLD, SO TO SPEAK, FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS, AT WHICH TIME WE WILL TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE NEED AND AT HOW THE STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION PROCESS IS GOING.

9. AN APPROACH OF THIS SORT WILL PROBABLY DISAPPOINT THE LAO, BUT IT DOES NOT CLOSE ANY DOORS. IT ALSO GIVES US MORE TIME TO LET DOMESTIC AND CONGRESSIONAL OPINION DEVELOP ON THIS AND SIMILAR ISSUES.
ROBERTS

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